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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/648,464	08/25/2003	James D. Ralph	F-286	8288
51640	7590	06/01/2005	EXAMINER	
LERNER, DAVID, LITTENBERG, KRUMHOLZ & MENTLIK, LLP 600 SOUTH AVENUE WEST WESTFIELD, NJ 07090				BLANCO, JAVIER G
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
3738				

DATE MAILED: 06/01/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/648,464	RALPH ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Javier G. Blanco	3738

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 28 February 2005.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-3,5,7-9,11 and 12 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 1-3,5,7-9,11 and 12 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ . |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>2/28/2005</u> . | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Amendment

1. Applicants' cancellation of claims 4, 6, and 10 in the reply filed on February 28, 2005 is acknowledged.
2. Applicants' amendment of independent claims 1 and 7 in the reply filed on February 28, 2005 is acknowledged.

Terminal Disclaimer

3. The terminal disclaimer filed on February 28, 2005 disclaiming the terminal portion of any patent granted on this application which would extend beyond the expiration date of US 6,764,515 has been reviewed and is accepted. The terminal disclaimer has been recorded.

Claim Objections

4. Claims 11 and 12 are objected to because of the following informalities:
 - a. Regarding claim 11, please add --deflectable-- in front of "convex" (see line 2). This is to conform to recently amended independent claim 7. Appropriate correction is required.
 - b. Regarding claim 12, please add --deflectable-- in front of "convex" (see line 2). This is to conform to recently amended independent claim 7. Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

5. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

6. Claims 1, 5, 7, 11, and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being clearly anticipated by Stubstad et al. (US 3,867,728 A; cited in Applicants' IDS).

Referring to Figures 1, 2, and 4, Stubstad et al. disclose an intervertebral spacer device (device 10) comprising: (i) first (top element 11) and second (bottom element 12) plate members, each having an external plate surface *adapted to seat* (emphasis added to functional language) against an opposing bone surface, the plate members being disposed such that the external plate surfaces face in opposite directions, at least one of the external plate surfaces having a deflectable/deformable (see column 8, lines 46-49; column 9, lines 14-17), convex (see Figure 4; see column 13, lines 24-26), wire mesh (e.g., Dacron mesh 21 and/or Dacron mesh 20; see column 8, lines 6-10 and lines 43-59; column 9, lines 10-18) thereon, wherein the deflectable convex wire mesh is capable of deforming *for seating* (emphasis added to functional language) against one of the opposing bone surfaces (see entire document).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claims 1-3, 5, 7-9, 11, and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ralph et al. (US 5,989,291; previously cited in PTO-892) in view of Stubstad et al. (US 3,867,728 A; cited in Applicants' IDS).

As seen in Figures 3b, 4, 5, and 7-9, Ralph et al. disclose an intervertebral spacer device comprising first and second plate members (e.g., 100a, 100b), each having an external plate surface (e.g., 102a, 102b) thereof, the plate members being disposed such that the external plate surfaces face in opposite directions. Ralph et al. disclose plate members 100a, 100b as convex (see column 2, lines 61-63) and as having a porous coating (see column 3, lines 4-6; column 5, lines 57-61). Additionally, Ralph et al. teach a porous, resilient/flexible (i.e., deflectable; see column 3, lines 8-18; column 6, lines 17-21), and convex (see Figures 4 and 9) fabric/mesh (circumferential wall 120) on an external lateral portion of the intervertebral spacer device (see Figures 4, 6, and 9). Further, Ralph et al. disclose ball-shaped head 207 to be received and hold within curvate volume 233 (see columns 6 and 7).

Although Ralph et al. disclose the external plate surfaces as convex to match the contour of the opposing bone surface (see column 2, lines 61-65), and a porous coating on said external plate surfaces to provide for tissue ingrowth (see column 3, lines lines 4-6; column 5, lines 57-61), they did not particularly disclose said external plate surfaces as having a deflectable/deformable surface (or mesh) thereon. However, this is well known in the art. For example, Stubstad et al. teach an intervertebral spacer device comprising external plate surfaces having a deflectable/deformable, convex wire mesh thereon (see 102(b) rejection above) in order for the external plate surfaces to adapt/match to any small irregularities in the vertebral surfaces and to enable deeper tissue ingrowth on said external plate surfaces (see columns 8 and 9).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have combined the teaching of an intervertebral spacer device comprising external plate surfaces having a deflectable/deformable, convex wire mesh thereon, as taught by Stubstad et al., with the intervertebral spacer device of Ralph et al., in order for the external plate surfaces to adapt/match to any small irregularities in the vertebral surfaces and to enable deeper tissue ingrowth on said external plate surfaces.

Response to Arguments

9. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1 and 7 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Conclusion

10. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event,

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however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Javier G. Blanco whose telephone number is 571-272-4747. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F (7:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.), first Friday of the bi-week off.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Corrine McDermott can be reached on (571) 272-4754. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306 for regular communications and After Final communications. Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-0858.

JGB



May 24, 2005



David H. Willse
Primary Examiner